222 413 [415] makes a forked hook, which takes hold of the honeycomb when the stick is withdrawn from the bee hole. Finally, the Hottentot makes a honey bag, *//kxo·rob, from the hide of an iguona, in which he collects honey. [Picture. Honey stick, 1/5 natural size.]

4. Salt

263 317 Salt exists in Namaland in the coastal desert in sufficient amounts for household use. (Cf. Plate IX, below.) The women collect the salty earth in pails, fill them up with water, leave the liquid till it is clear and then pour it off into a flat dish and leave it in the sun to evaporate.

[206]

5. Eating Meals

●264 Eating meals is not associated with any special time. Only breakfast, as the first meal of the day, has a name, so·bos. When at the hut the time and place of a meal is determined by the arrival of the cattle, when traveling by the division of the marches into treks, and on the hunt by a lucky shot.

264 415 The branches of Mesembrianthemum Marlothii Pax (cf. page 85) are often used in the field for dishes and plates, but other bushes are also used. In permanent households the wooden !ore·s serve as eating dishes. A large wooden spoon, //go/a·b is used to serve the food from it to those sitting around. [Picture. Wooden Spoons, 1/5 natural size.] There are no specific eating habits. Only two oc-
264 casional customs, which are observed here and there when people are in a good mood, came to my attention. If the hunt for bulbs has been successful, then everyone sitting in a circle around the full pot enjoys a childish pleasure called *a·m//ga·ro. It is not an improvised jest but a custom well known to the people. One after another, each may help himself as long as he succeeds in catching the bulbs which he must throw into the air in his mouth. Even old people participate in this game.

264 524 Tsu·bugu/hu·ru is a game which the children play. They cut up a piece of meat given to them in common into small pieces, place the pieces one after another on a stone, and as soon as the hand of the person who places the meat there is withdrawn, the others quickly try to seize it. The piece belongs to the quickest.

264
415

[p.206]

Wooden spoons, 1/5 natural size.

2: Schapera E-4, 5 (no date) 1930
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Nama
Cape Hottentots

the */naras* and *tsama* are preferred most of all, on account of both the water content of the flesh and the food value of the kernel. The Topnaars in the vicinity of Walvis Bay still live for a considerable part of the year almost exclusively on the */naras*, and hence are often known by the tribal name of */Naranin*.

All the food obtained is generally shared in common. If game is brought home, the whole camp gathers about the hut of the possessor till all the meat is consumed, and so too with everything else. Even to-day in South-West Africa if a Nama has anything to eat, e.g. a piece of meat or bread, he is bound by old custom to share it with anyone coming up to him. Failure to do so would expose him to the greatest contempt. The communal meal, as we shall see, is one of the outstanding features in the ceremonial life of the people; while in ordinary life their hospitality is so generous and far-reaching that their economic system has in consequence been termed by several writers a sort of communism.

There is as a rule no fixed time for eating. Only the morning meal, taken after the cows have been milked and driven out to pasture, has a special name, *sobos*. The time and place of the other meals are regulated according to circumstance: in camp by the return of the herds from pasture, on the march by outspans, on the hunt by a successful shot, and so on. The preparation of meals is the task of the women, and generally each woman prepares the food for her family on the fire in the hut. Normally both men and women now eat together, each family by itself, but there are certain communal meals in which the sexes are strictly separated or in which only the members of one sex may take part. According to Kolb, however, men and women among the Cape Hottentots always ate apart, all the people of each sex eating together. This separation of the sexes at meals he attributes to the fear that one of the women might be menstruating, and would thus contaminate any men associating with her or coming near her.[1] There is evidence also, as we shall see in discussing the boys' puberty ceremonies, that among the Naman the men at least formerly ate together and apart from their wives.

There is little information as to the existence of food taboos among the Hottentots in more recent times. The only well-authenticated instance is in the case of the hare, which in all the tribes might be eaten only by women and children, and was strictly forbidden to men

[1] Op. cit., 102–3.

2: Schapera E-4, 5 (no date) 1930
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Nama
Cape Hottentots

he must also present two milch cows, or, if he is poor, one will do; while to her father he must also give several head of cattle. In return, however, he receives almost as many—probably in the form of dowry to the wife, who also brings with her into the marriage her own hut.[1]

The important feature of this account, apart from the circumstantial description of the wooing, is the clear evidence it provides for the holding of a special meal in which only the bride and previously-married women take part. Meals of this sort, by means of which persons entering upon a new stage of life are aggregated into the group of persons already in that stage, play an important part in almost all the social ceremonies of the Hottentots. Except in the present instance, however, there is no definite statement that such a meal accompanies marriage, although, as we shall see, its existence as an essential part of the marriage ceremony is hinted at in the careful analysis given by Mrs. Hoernlé of the transition rites ("rites de passage") of the Hottentots.

In the case of the Cape Hottentots, all trace of the marriage ceremonies has naturally long since disappeared. For information about them we have to rely for the most part upon seventeenth and eighteenth century accounts, which as a rule leave much to be desired. The two most useful sources of this kind are Graevenbroeck and Kolb, whose descriptions again introduce several new features.[2]

According to Kolb, the boy, when he has picked on the girl he wishes to marry, approaches his father, who then acts as his intermediary with her parents. If they are favourably inclined, and here again there is first a show of reluctance, the boy then for the first time directly asks the girl for her consent. If she says yes, all is well; if not, the two sleep together on the following night, when the girl has to struggle to retain her virginity. If she is successful, the suitor must depart; but if, as generally happens, she becomes tired and gives in to him, the marriage is settled, whether she is willing or not. It is not unlikely that in this episode we really have something akin to the wooing described by Wikar, but Kolb's short description of it is more romantic than exhaustive, so that the resemblance cannot be stressed.

[1] This exchange of cattle at marriage is incidentally mentioned by several later writers on the Nama, but their statements are so inadequate that its real nature cannot be determined.

[2] Graevenbroeck, "Uit den Ouden Tijd," 2–3; Kolb, *Vorgebirge der Guten Hoffnung*, 70–3; cf. Thunberg, *Travels in Europe, Africa, and Asia*, ii, 192; Dapper, *Naukeurige Beschrijvinge der Afrikaensche Gewesten, Tweede Deel*, 273.

2: Schapera E-4, 5 (no date) 1930
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Nama

mental stability under conditions which would otherwise demoralize him by despair, anxiety, and fear. It is suggestive by way of contrast that, both here and among the Bushmen, no usages and beliefs of this nature appear to be bound up with the methods of trapping and snaring, where the pursuit is certain, reliable and well under the control of rational methods and technological processes.

Another usage mentioned by Olpp is that any man killing an elephant, rhinoceros, or hippopotamus must slaughter a sheep or a goat; only the hunter may eat of this meat, while all the others present may eat of the meat of the fallen animal.[1] This usage, as recorded by him, appears to be the remnant of what was formerly an extremely important ceremony in Hottentot life—the reception of a man into the ranks of the hunters. A detailed description of this ceremony is given by Wikar, who was himself able to take part in it. He relates[2] that once, when he and some Naman had killed a rhinoceros, one of the young men with them asked to become the "master killer" ("baas doodmaker") of the animal, although in reality he had had nothing to do with its actual death. His wish granted, the young man took his spear, and plunged it into the dead beast, until it was covered with blood. Then he stood aside and directed how the best meat should be cut off for him for the coming sacramental meal ("andersmaken"). The animal was slit open, the entrails extracted and thrown over his head. The meat was then cut up and brought to the fire, the reserved portions being appropriated by the "master killer", and the festivities began. When the meat was sufficiently cooked, it was shared out by the young man to everybody present who had previously undergone the same ceremony; no one else was allowed to take part in the meal. The fire used for cooking the meat could not be taken away and used at other places, nor could anybody even light his pipe with it; and when the cooking was all over it was completely extinguished. The sinews of the rhinoceros were given to the initiate, and carefully kept by him until he would be able to get a sheep and complete the ceremony. Now also his face was smeared all over with potblack, then wiped clean in a few places, leaving his features "prettily ornamented" with cross-like designs.

Later on, when they came to a neighbouring village, the initiate obtained a sheep by barter. Then all the spears of the other men entitled to take part in the meal were held close together in a bundle,

[1] Loc. cit. [2] "Berigt aan den Heer van Plettenberg," 109–10.

10: Grevenbroek F-5 (ca. 1694) 1933
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Cape Hottentot

both with a powder of the bochu shrub, just as in the old days we learn it was the practice of the Greeks and Romans to sprinkle a victim with milled and salted flour before sacrifice. Next the entrails of the slaughtered animal are hung in waved and twisted coils about the neck of each, much as our countrymen do with girdles, necklaces and ornaments for the breast. Finally the priest solemnly exhorts the young couple to mutual love, a chaste concern for the marriage bed, unsullied faith, an earnest zeal in the begetting of children, and all the other duties of wedlock.

After this, full of their native jollity, they fall upon their greasy banquet and clean it up, and musicians beating the earth with free foot begin the dance. Men banquet with men as if in special quarters; women feast with women in a place reserved for them.[32a]) Each sex is under a separate roof. Only the bride on this auspicious day, which ought to be gayest for her above all, fasts till the morrow's dawn, nor though her throat be on fire will she taste of any drink. I suppose that she conceals her excessive joy at gaining a husband by an exhibition of affected gloom, while all the time exulting with joy at being enrolled among the wives. Then when night falls the husband sleeps alone with the bride in the house that has been built for the consummation of these rites. What prodigies they here devise and act remain concealed beneath the robe of Harpocrates and the veil of Lucina, and so far as concerns me may remain so for ever.

When the brilliant celebration of the nuptials is over, the bridegroom, accompanied by the kinsfolk and connections of both, by the bridesmen and his friends, leads the bride to his home. Here the drinking and feasting are resumed, and the festivities repeated, to welcome the pair as the occasion demands. Then when sacrifice has been made, so that nothing should be lacking to complete the scene, and when the solemn inauguration has been accomplished by the priest, after calling down all sorts of blessings on the newly-married pair, all promptly depart and resume their usual activities.

When a woman is in childbed, her relations perform the duties of the midwife. These women on the eighth day after the birth of the child, and sometimes even later, wash the young mother from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet thoroughly, before letting her go abroad. The men are turned out of the hut. The temperature of the

---

32a) This separation of the sexes at meals, and especially at feasts, is noticed by most writers on the early Hottentots.

10: Grevenbroek F-5 (ca. 1694) 1933
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Cape Hottentot
South Nguni FX17

I have now described the outfit of a fashionable male, and the dress and adornment in which the women, both wives and maids, flaunt themselves, festooned with ribbons and half-naked, and smeared with various decorative pigments. Among the Magosi when women meet, they embrace and kiss, their faces beam with joy, each takes the other's hand in friendly greeting, and they enquire of one another: Where from? and Whither away? How does your health? and what is the news in your part? and what new ditties and dances have you learned? chatting together as thick as thieves.[73])

The men on this side of the mountain follow the ancient Roman practice of binding their feet with skin shoes by way of sandals; the women do so only in thorny bushes and thickets through which no lion or wild beast could force a way, otherwise their feet, which are wonderfully small, are bare and unshod. If hunger overtakes the natives in desert places far from their huts, these velskoene, pounded with flints and roasted on the fire, furnish their last repast.

Some assert that their race came into being from a male and female simultaneously sprung from the earth; others, among the Magosi, following the steadfast tradition of their ancestors, and one more in harmony with the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, ascribe their origin to a man and his wife who in remote times descended through a window on to the earth. All are agreed that from these first parents they learned agriculture and the storing of grains and berries, the milking of cattle, the brewing of beer and the making of bread.[74]) There is a gleam of sense in their words.

Their food is as rough as their clothing, and both are lacking in elegance and refinement. On the ground, after washing their hands, they eat the food the women have prepared; on the ground they sleep. The same skin that covers them by day is conveniently converted at night to supply the uses of a pillow, a mattress, a rug and a mosquito net.

Our nearest neighbours whose wanderings bring them quite close to us, and those who are scattered over the mountains, live a hand-to-mouth existence as robbers and cattle-raiders; they keep to desert places untouched by human cultivation; they are bound by no discipline, obey hardly any custom or law, and are not subject to the

---

other, men and women, young and old alike, asking whence they come, and where they are going, what news they have, and whether they have not learned any new dances and songs."